

Its Ramadi assault mixed terrorism with conventional tactics. At least 30 huge truck bombs, some reportedly as large as the one used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, obliterated the city's defenses, and ISIS forces poured through the breach. A similar attack could be in store for Baghdad. It is assumed that ISIS operatives are in the capital's Sunni enclaves, with more en route disguised as refugees.

The fall of Baghdad to ISIS would harm American strategic interests as the fall of Saigon did in 1975. The blow to U.S. credibility and the enhancement of ISIS's prestige, of its black flag rising over an evacuated U.S. Embassy, would be incalculable. To prevent this outcome, President Obama should consider taking the following actions.

Use strategic air power. America's unrivaled air forces can hit ISIS from anywhere: neighboring countries, the sea and the continental U.S. Yet the sorties flown so far have been minimal, and damage inflicted still less, even as ISIS held a parade in broad daylight in Rutba, Iraq, last week.

That is the kind of target our aviators dream of. Rules of engagement need to be loosened, U.S. air controllers sent to the front to call in strikes, and more combat aircraft put into the fight.

Launch ruthless special operations. Recent raids into Syria were daring and skillful. But a handful of missions do not resemble the operations led by U.S. Army Gens. Stanley McChrystal and Michael Flynn in 2006-07 that eventually broke the back of ISIS's predecessor, al Qaeda in Iraq, and drove it abroad.

At that campaign's height, commandos conducted multiple missions every night. They analyzed intelligence collected on one "objective" to find and fix targets they finished on successive raids. The rhythm, persistence and sheer number of those operations crushed the enemy. Emulate them now, starting near Baghdad.

Capture and interrogate ISIS leaders. Much of the intelligence exploited on those missions came from documents and electronics found in terrorist safe houses. But the best came from interrogations, some conducted on the battlefield as the smoke cleared.

Interrogators acted within the bounds of decency against evil men who deserved no quarter. Yet neither were military and CIA personnel constrained by the rules of evidence and criminal procedure, because their goal wasn't a courtroom conviction, but the location of the next high-value target. A robust program of capturing and roughly interrogating terrorists abroad should resume, first focused on the whereabouts of ISIS operatives in and around Baghdad.

There is also a role for police work. ISIS has devotees in all 50 U.S. states; hundreds of Americans traveled abroad to fight for them, and some number have returned. The FBI and state and local law enforcement should make aggressive use of antiterror statutes to question—and perhaps flip into informants—suspects who may be in contact with terror leaders with details of ISIS plans regarding Baghdad. Congress should reauthorize the National Security Agency's signals intelligence programs identifying such communications between Americans and known terrorists abroad.

Send ground combat forces. Despite U.S. efforts to restrain them, the Iraqi army is now unable or unwilling to stand and fight ISIS alone. Its commanders have shamefully thrown down their weapons, discarded their uniforms, and abandoned their men and posts when ISIS threatens. The Iraqi army needs a backbone transplant.

U.S. airborne units can arrive quickly to secure Baghdad's airport and the long and

vital road from the city to that airfield. More Marines can better defend the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Americans can stiffen Iraqi lines around the city, and provide artillery and engineer units needed in urban combat. U.S. cavalry units can launch what imperial Britain called "punitive expeditions" to destroy ISIS lairs further afield.

The arrival of thousands more American fighting men will improve the Iraqi army's performance. It was no accident that the Sunni Awakening and U.S. surge succeeded at the same time in 2006-07. As U.S. troops poured in, Sunni sheiks cast their lot with what Bing West memorialized as the "The Strongest Tribe" in his book of the same name.

There are natural advantages to defending Baghdad, which the Iraqis can exploit if steered by U.S. troops. To seize the capital, ISIS's lines of communication would expand, a logistical challenge that would leave them more vulnerable to counterattack. The Iraqi army's lines of communication would helpfully contract.

The Tigris River is a significant obstacle, and a defensible one. Urban combat favors prepared defenders. And Baghdad is a dense city, its population having swelled to more than seven million, crammed into a place the size of Baltimore or Boston.

Most important, the predominantly Shiite Iraqi army would be fighting to protect its brethren, unlike previous battles in mostly Sunni cities where they broke and ran.

This fight is winnable. But if the administration whistles past the graveyard and insists its policy is working even as ISIS nears Baghdad and our diplomats there, the White House may face a debacle that makes Benghazi seem minor in comparison.

KECHI OKWUCHI'S ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY GRADUATION

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud Kechi Okwuchi, for her recent graduation from St. Thomas University in Houston.

Over the past ten years, Kechi has had to overcome many hardships. On December 10, 2005 Kechi was the only survivor of a horrific plane crash at Port Harcourt International Airport in Nigeria where her plane made a crash landing nearly 70 meters off of the runway. The crash claimed the lives of all of the other passengers on board including 108 of Kechi's classmates and friends. After receiving medical treatment in South Africa, Kechi moved to Pearland to receive medical treatment at Shriners' Hospital for Children in Galveston. At her May 16th Commencement Ceremony, Kechi was selected to give a speech before crossing the stage and receiving her degree. She has met and conquered many obstacles on her way to receiving her diploma. Her positive outlook throughout it all is truly an inspiration.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Kechi for graduating from St. Thomas University.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed roll call votes 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, and 260. If present, I would have voted "no" on roll call 253, "yea" on roll call 254, "yea" on roll call 255, "yea" on roll call 256, "yea" on roll call 257, "no" on roll call 258, and "no" on roll call 260.

SABLATURA MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Sablatura Middle School Student Council on receiving the National Association of Elementary School Principals' Student Council Excellence Award for the 2014-2015 school year.

This prestigious award recognizes the outstanding efforts and hard work of students striving towards leadership, citizenship, community service, and campus spirit. This is the fourth year that the Association has awarded Sablatura's student council excellence. We appreciate the dedication that the faculty sponsors make to developing young leaders in Pearland, Texas and look forward to seeing what these students achieve in the future.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to the Sablatura Middle School Student Council for this remarkable achievement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for votes on Monday, June 1, 2015.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on roll call vote 264, "yea" on roll call vote 265, and "yea" on roll call vote 266.

Finally, I would have voted "nay" on roll call vote 267 in opposition to H.R. 1335, the Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act.

JAELYNN WALLS GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA GOLD AWARD

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jaelynn Walls, for earning the Girl Scouts of the USA Gold Award, the most prestigious Girl Scout honor.